



THE SENATE
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Contact: Jennifer Riedel
(517) 373-5932

Senate approves Brown, Birkholz legislation to protect state parks

LANSING – Legislation designed to protect Michigan’s state parks was unanimously approved by the Michigan Senate Wednesday, said state Sens. Cameron S. Brown and Patty Birkholz.

“I’m happy to see such an important piece of legislation approved by my colleagues in the Michigan Senate,” said Brown, R-Fawn River Township. “We must do everything possible to protect our natural wonders and help ensure they will be here for future generations to enjoy.”

Senate Bill 971, sponsored by Brown, would prevent the Department of Natural Resources from selling a state park and any specially designated natural or wilderness area – making it a special act requiring approval from the Legislature.

Currently, there is no provision in state law requiring legislative review of any proposal to sell a state park or a natural or wilderness area.

The legislation would also require the State Park Advisory Committee study any DNR proposal to sell a state park. In addition, the DNR would be required to hold a public hearing in the vicinity of the park prior to proposing a sale.

“We need a process in place to make sure that our state parks aren’t sold out from under us,” Brown said. “There should be some accountability and an opportunity for the public to share their thoughts and concerns.”

Birkholz’s SB 972 would prevent the DNR from designating state park land as “surplus land” without specific legislative approval.

Under current Michigan law the DNR is allowed to declare any land it owns as surplus land and put it up for sale.

“Today’s passage to protect our state parks is a great step toward maintaining the natural beauty of Michigan for future generations to enjoy,” said Birkholz, R-Saugatuck Township. “This will assure residents and visitors that their beloved state parks will not be sold off for development and will remain for years and years.”

SBs 971 and 972 will now go to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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